

## Mayor's Minute - January 31, 2020

In my last Mayor' Minute (January 16, 2020) I spoke about the budget process getting underway at the District of Summerland, and presented these facts:

- 87% of taxes are from residential ratepayers compared to 0.5% from agriculture;
- 65% of our land base is zoned agriculture; 15% is zoned recreational;
- a 1% mill rate increase = \$87,093 in tax revenue;
- the District maintains 150 km of paved roads;
- maintaining current service levels does not mean a 0% mill rate because there are several factors over which Council has no control.

One of these factors is property assessments. Early in January the B.C. Assessment Authority (B.C.A.A.) released general values throughout areas of the province. Although Summerland has received an average market value assessment increase of 2% as of July 1, 2019, that does not automatically mean a 2% increase in property assessment for all Summerland property owners—it is an average. According to B.C.A.A., the average cost for a single detached home in Summerland is \$526,000 (up 2% over 2018 assessed values).

As announced last week, the District of Summerland is proposing a 4% property tax increase for 2020. This amount represents 3.12% in operational increases and .88% to be allocated to our Infrastructure Reserve.

Operational increases are for a number of initiatives Council and District staff are proposing this year. Each of the initiatives being brought forward is aligned with Council's Strategic Priorities. Among other things, the District is:

- hosting an Affordable Housing Forum early in 2020 that will bring together BC Housing, non-profit and market housing developers, local organizations and housing providers. This initiative will build on the findings and recommendations in the 2017 Affordable Summerland Report as well as on Council discussions at UBCM in September 2019. Council has also partnered with the RDOS for grant funding to complete a Housing Needs Assessment.  
**How will this help?** Affordable/attainable housing options in Summerland will provide an opportunity for those not yet in the housing market to become homeowners, thus expanding the range of housing types in the community and increasing the number of residents paying property taxes. While this will not lower the District's *percentage* of revenue from residential taxes, it may increase workforce housing and assist young families in getting into market housing.
- continuing to amend and adopt bylaws that densify areas with existing services, particularly in the downtown core (through multi-use zoning) and the immediate surrounding areas (carriage houses, secondary suites, and 2- or 3-lot subdivisions).  
**How will this help?** Multi-use zoning (allowing for a combination of commercial/retail and residential buildings) and zoning for carriage houses, secondary suites and small subdivisions increase the number of people living in the main Summerland area without increasing future operational and capital costs on new infrastructure to accommodate these new builds. Again, this will not lower the District's percentage of residential tax revenue, but sustainable growth increases the number of contributing property owners.
- developing a Downtown Neighbourhood Plan—with input from residents, business owners and local organizations— that will ensure downtown Summerland meets our population's current and future needs.  
**How will this help?** Any undertaking, regardless of size, is more likely to succeed when guided by a plan. There are several reasons for this, including that a comprehensive plan lays out clearly defined objectives and opportunities, budget, funding options and phasing

timelines. Increasing residential density in the downtown core is good for the area's businesses and a vibrant downtown is attractive to visitors and fosters business expansion.

- seeking funding from other governments or organizations, whenever possible. The District is also striving to collaborate or partner on initiatives, including grant applications. (For example, the District is Summerland is partnering with the RDOS and some municipal governments on provincial grant applications for regional Housing Needs and Child Care Needs Assessments.) Grants from senior levels of government and others alleviate pressure for revenue from taxes.

**How will this help?** Council and staff are always looking for ways to address priorities while remaining fiscally responsible. Multi-agency partnerships, such as the proposed Summerland Community Health and Recreation Centre, not only shares the financial costs between organizations, but also satisfies a number of community needs. Again, grants and funding from outside the District alleviate pressure for revenue from taxes.

- working with potential partners on a Summerland Community Health and Wellness Centre.  
**How will this help?** This proposed project, being brought forward to the community in February, will provide benefits for the entire community in the areas of child care, recreation and health services. Working collaboratively enhances funding opportunities with senior levels of government, increases livability by filling gaps outside of local government purview, and creates social cohesion and a healthier community.

- pursuing the potential for a Food Innovation and Processing Hub in Summerland.  
**How will this help?** Value-added agriculture (processing, manufacturing, or marketing a raw agricultural value to create a product of increased value) has increasingly be identified as a considerable opportunity in B.C. Establishing a regional (primarily South Okanagan-Similkameen) Hub in Summerland provides significant opportunities for agri-business entrepreneurs and innovators, raises the profile of the community to, potentially, attract outside investment, provides a space for agricultural innovation, and creates good-paying, skilled employment.

Each of these initiatives contributes, in one or many ways, to making Summerland an even better place to live. Budget details and more information on many of the District's 2020+ projects will be available at the Open House scheduled from 4 pm to 7 pm on Wednesday, February 12. A formal presentation will be made at 5:30pm. The Open house is being held in the banquet hall located on the second floor of the Summerland Arena (8820 Jubilee Road East).